

UPSTAIRS CLUB

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An Educational Group

DANCE had a better year in Chicago, that is, totally discounting the Harper Series, which only displayed how badly and foolishly Ford Foundation money is spent ... The Selzer Dance series was excellent this year, starting with that magnificent group of dancers of Martha Graham. It was truly the most satisfying evening of dance in many a year ... produced with integrity, taste, brains and great dancing. And what a pleasure it was to see the Ukrainian Dancers again which is without question the tops in folk work. Actually it goes beyond folk and becomes art. The Winnipeg Company was worth seeing if only to see the five top male dancers. Then the refreshing and beautiful Jose Molina group - the best since Luisillio - pure Spanish dance without all the affectations and writhing that has become so prevalent in the past few years. The last of the series was Mexico's Folklorico with their eye filling and colorful staging - always a delight. I for one feel that the folk groups are surpassing the Ballet Companies with their pretentiousness and dull struggle with sex and their dancers without joy. The Ballet Theatre's "Swan Lake" (or "Hello Swan Lake") with The Wittop flashy attire was a bore - except for the companies really good corps de ballet who stole the show. The Harkness company added up to less than a bore ... very good dancers with nothing to perform. In the past, more choreographers discarded most of their first efforts but today we are supposed to be enthralled by these first efforts without craftsmanship, content, or even visual pleasure. As for news - almost everything went by the boards with all the storms ... little can be said about them that has not already been said. Thursday, the 26th of January, was a week end to remember - riding busses like having a race on the back of an inch worm - L platforms loaded with irate people with full trains going by them - garbage problems - fires galore - heart attacks from shoveling snow - food hoarding - stranded people everywhere. During it all, the school only missed having classes on Friday. LORRAINE MCINTYRE came in saying she knew the banks, the

stockbrokers and Stone Camryn would be open. For the first class on Saturday, ROBERTA TANKIN had the first private lesson I've taught in 25 years. The storm had its nice aspects - mainly, did you notice the good clean fresh air? Cannot remember when we have had such air in Chicago before - and with the snow actually white! Then there was a nice friendly feeling of people helping each other and laughing off their problems. As evidence of the fabulous snow removal job done by the city - on February 14th I was walking on North Avenue on the side walk when I realized I was walking on snow above the parking meters. At the moment we are very hard at work on the spring concerts which will present many new faces this year. There will be some of the more advanced present - ELISABETH WINEBERG will return from Boston to dance "Sense of Wonder" again with the same family cast - STEVE PRIMIS, MAGGIE SMITH and DEAN BADOLATO. MR. STONE has revived a ballet danced on the STONE CAMRYN BALLET tour in the 50's - "Foo-fooraw". It is to have a brilliant cast with CARRÉN CHESHER, ANNA DROGOSZEWSKI, STEVE PRIMIS, KATHY PARKIN and BILL BADOLATO. Everyone is sure to like this gay frolic and this time STONE has outdone himself with those humorous touches he does so well. A third ballet is to be a set of dances to music written by Mozart for Carnivals in Prague and Vienna. The dances will present many of the young hopefuls coming up in the school at the moment. The Divertissements will be different on Friday and Sunday. Mr. Camryn will dance "DR. ELI DUFFY" for the last time on the Friday evening performance and "MC GREW" for the last time on the Sunday afternoon show. This is it! In just mentioning the city of Prague, brings to mind that JOHN KRIZA will leave soon for that city with PAUL GODKIN to produce a night club show for a new Hilton Hotel there. Sounds like an exciting adventure for the two of them. BILL REILLY has a featured part in the Belefonte TV show on the 6th ... we shall

all be watching, Bill!

Our DONNA (JEANNE MILLER) MILLS has a silent part in the new Woody Allen show, "Don't Drink The Water". It apparently is a pantomime part and she does not speak (silly after having had considerable success as an actress in Joan Bennett's plays. SHEILA REILLY went on a quick vacation to New York for Easter week to visit brother BILL and catch up on shows. In 4 days she managed to see "Mame", "Sweet Charity", "Apple Tree", "Walking Happy", and "Sherry". She agrees that the inability of modern composers to write music that one might remember, makes most shows depend on the performer for success. Mr. STONE was the next one to take a breather in Phoenix, Arizona. At this writing, he is, no doubt, basking in sunshine while here in Chicago we are beneath a blanket of fog and smog. While there he will be visiting the KELLY BROWN family and ASTA and NORRIS NELSON.

QUOTATIONS from "A PERFECT EDUCATION"
by Kenneth E. Eble

Teachers and books, then, and someone
to love them, to cherish them,
these come first.

Learning begins in delight and flourishes
in wonder.

Work can be the most satisfactory kind of
play, if one brings to it imagination
and zest.

Reasoning from what style is in terms of
man's skills we must require a similar
definition for style in life. It must
be the mastery over all one does, with
simplicity, harmony and grace.

No teacher can safely assume that any
pupil has learned anything previously
about any subject.

All art, all life, all education is a
search for order.

A pupil from whom nothing is ever de-
manded which he cannot do, never
does all he can.

Having achieved widespread mediocrity, our
schools now build for uniform
excellence.

The NOVIKOFF Period At The Opera
By Walter Camryn

Our first meeting with "Novie", our familiar name for him, was in the classroom. It is easier for me now, to imagine his feelings when he first faced this group of 40 dancers from every section of the country and from as many schools, each with a different training. It goes without saying that he faced the situation with determination. For six weeks we had lessons that were probably the most precise and demanding ones we had ever had in our lives. The classes were two and three hours long, with little inspiration, without music, painfully slow and with great repetition. He demanded more and more perfection from each of us daily. The result was a company with a unified style by the time of the opening performance.

If I calculate correctly "Novie" was 41 years of age at that time and I remember how we all felt that he was much older. Possibly because of all we knew about his very extensive career up to this time.

Laurent Novikoff graduated from the Imperial Ballet School in 1906 and made his debut at the Bolshoi Theatre in 1908. He had joined the Diaghileff Company for the Paris season in 1909 and was Premier Danseur for the Moscow Imperial Ballet in 1910. In 1911 he first joined Anna Pavlowa as her partner. In the years 1913-1914 they toured America. After this he returned to Russia to stage dances for the Moscow Opera and following the revolution he left Russia in August 1918. In 1919 he was again in the Diaghileff Company and for two seasons he danced as Karsavina's partner. In 1921 he rejoined Pavlowa and remained with her until 1928 when he established his school in London. In 1929 he became Ballet Master for the Chicago Civic Opera and was there for four seasons. In 1941-1945 he was Ballet Master at the Metropolitan Opera.

Mr. Novikoff's choreography was highly detailed with intricate floor patterns and crossings with split second timing; if not on the exact beat chaos reigned. He was fond of using progressive movements with each dancer starting on a different count, interfusing five or six movements in four counts with off beat accents.

These ideas produced interesting affects but required great concentration from the dancer. Sometimes the choreography was so complex and technical that it was difficult to perform with any personality or expression; but this too, was expected of the dancers. In the court dances in "Rigoletto" we had to carry on conversations as we danced to give the dances a more realistic court appearance. His ballet in the opera "Aida" was no doubt the most complicated of all his ballets and we spent six weeks learning his choreography. It was rich in decorative head, hand and arm movements, angular leg work, as we had to weave in and out of frieze-like formations. He himself danced the opening performance which was to be his very last performance. The corps rarely stood still as the soloists worked in his ballets so we saw nothing of his performance. In this performance he insisted on a certain shade of terra cotta body makeup that could only be procured at a now defunct makeup concern. It was beautiful to see, but the trouble was that we went around for weeks with it on our skin; we were dyed terra cotta almost permanently.

Two of his ballets were great fun to perform, "The Bartered Bride" and "La Juive". Both were comedy ballets which gave almost every dancer a prominent part to play. In both Operas we were strolling players presenting a street show. Other ballets I especially remember with pleasure were in "Iris", "Herodiade", "Trovatore", "Traviata", "Samson and Delilah" and "Don Quichotte". The opera "Samson and Delilah" has never been done so well in Chicago since that time in fact, it is usually a failure. Much of its success in those days was due to Cyrena Van Gordon's luscious performance and Novikoff's ballet. Both were impeccable in style and character. He had a great flair for Bacchanals and we danced them in "Herodiade", "Faust" "Tannhauser" and "Mefistofele" as well.

Ballets with Opera in Chicago had its most important years during this period and it has never reached the same peak since. Full ballet evenings were never given but were presented either before or after a short opera. In those four years Novikoff choreographed "Chopiniana", "Prince Igor", "Le Lac des Cygnes", "El amor Brujo", "Le Coq D'or" and a Divertis-

sement program which included a series of dances then called "Pas Classique Hongrois" - today known as the "Grand Pas" (Balan-chine). In those days it was considered a divertissement and actually that is all it is today. After our fourth season Mr. Novikoff choreographed the Stravinsky "Pulcinella" for another opera group in the city. It is interesting to note here that after the 1932 season Novikoff was offered a tour of 22 weeks with his ballets - but without guarantee - it was too large a risk for him to take upon himself with the depression in sight. Had he been given some encouragement and financial help from another source, it is possible our ballet history might have been very different here in Chicago.

The ballet company during these years was a respected part of the opera and this was due entirely to Mr. Novikoff's attitude toward his dancers. He spoke of us as his artists and we were expected to behave as such. Singers, especially the Italians, were not prone to respect dancers as artists and there were many times when Mr. Novikoff would shepherd his dancers off stage after some insult until amends had been made.

Occasionally these walk offs were disastrous. In "Le Coq D'or" - conductor Kirby and Novikoff had been having a feud and during the orchestra rehearsal Novikoff objected to a tempo. Kirby ignored Novikoff, so off we all marched. However the orchestra rehearsal went on and during it a long musical interlude was cut, making one scene follow another and leaving no time for the dancers to make costume changes. At the performance we went on not knowing this and the commotion that went on back stage was frantic to say the least. The dancers to the best of their ability made their changes and entered on cue, despite Mr. Kirby's lack of consideration and unprofessionalism.

At all stage rehearsals the ballet company appeared in sparkling white. The girls wearing starched white tutus and a tight fitting blouse. The boys in white linen knickers, white shirts, socks and shoes. It did not matter even if the ballet was a bacchanal where we rolled on the floor; white was worn, never-the-less. It just added to our laundry bills.

The girls tutus cost \$4.50 each to be done up at the laundry. Salaries were better in those pre-union days at the Chicago Civic than they are today with unions. True we did work longer hours but we enjoyed our work and were happy to be learning and working with the great artists of that time. (What a difference today!)

For many years the Opera had engaged a Ballet manager in the person of Ina E. Hagenaw. She was a woman with an irritating determination; once she made up her mind all hell could not stop her. At the time we, the dancers, felt she was unfair and too difficult for words, but, seeing the way dancers in the big companies behave today we all feel now that she had her place in the ballet world. Her duties ranged from making contracts, engaging dancers, arranging rehearsals and publicity, paying everyone at the end of the week, checking the performances from the front each night, and a thousand and one things that a ballet master with problems of his own could not do. She was said to be hard of hearing with poor eye sight but she could come back stage after a ballet with a note book full of mistakes seen. Dancers out of line, out of time, out of formation, costumes badly worn, hair not dressed properly, someone improperly made up, someone late in making an entrance or early in an exit, whatever it was "Ina E" never missed a thing. We often felt she made up some of the things she reported. But - she was a bear-cat of a disciplinarian and very good for the company. Ballet Masters always felt that she allowed her duties to carry over into their realm and this often brought a few stormy battles into our rehearsals.

The dancers were assembled from coast to coast and from companies from all over the world. There were dancers from the Anna Pavlowa company, Pavley and Oukrainsky. The Adolph Bolm Company, the Diaghileff Company, the Royal Danish and the Paris Opera Ballet.

Today they are scattered all over the world and in various fields of endeavor. Among the girls many married well and now have families of their own. A number are deceased - Julian Francesco who had many world tours with the Pavley Oukrainsky ballet - Valery Strechnev who came to us from Diaghileff was killed accidentally while working for the Du Pont Company - Turner Lundgren and Evelyn Beutow have passed away - and the lovely little Donna Parks was murdered by a jealous lover. The larger percentage of the dancers became teachers and many are still active today. They are - Edward Caton (had been in the Pavlowa Company) and is now teaching at the Washington School of Ballet - Harriet Lundgren (from Bolm Ballet and a Swedish company) now retired from teaching - Julia Barashkova has her own school in New York - Ruth Pryor has her own school in Cleveland - Kathleen Crofton (Pavlowa Company) is now teaching at the Metropolitan Opera Ballet School - Lila Haller (Paris Opera Ballet) has her own school in New Orleans - Florence Streltzov (wife of Valery Strechnev) has a school in Wilmington Delaware - June Runyon has her own school in Tulsa - Sven Larsen produces Broadway musicals in the Scandanavian countries - Elizabeth Werblowsky has a school in Des Moines - Teresa Rudolph now trains all the foremost figure skaters in Garmisch Germany, Stanley Judson when last heard from was training skaters - Betty Gour at Butler University - Margot Koche, Evelyn Chapman and Kitty Andrews have schools in and about Chicago.

And you no doubt know about Bentley Stone and Walter Camryn.

Those were the days and it really was quite a company!